

STANDING COMMISSION ON EPISCOPAL CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

MEMBERSHIP

The Very Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely, <i>Chair</i>	Arizona, VIII, 2009
Canon Cynthia McFarland, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	New Jersey, II, 2009
The Rev. Brenda Monroe, <i>Secretary</i>	Atlanta, IV, 2009
The Rt. Rev. David Jung Hsin	Taiwan, VIII, 2012
Mr. Sean McConnell	California, VIII, 2012
The Rt. Rev. F. Neff Powell	Southwestern Virginia, III, 2012
Dr. Brian K. Reid	California, VIII, 2009
The Rev. Canon Skip Schueddig	Atlanta, IV, 2012
The Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith	Arizona, VIII, 2009
Ms. Richelle Thompson	Southern Ohio, V, 2009
Ms. Jocelyn A. Tichenor	Nevada, VIII, 2012
Ms. Lauren Auttonberry, <i>Resigned</i>	Mississippi, IV, 2012
<i>Special representative of the President of the House of Deputies</i>	
The Rev. Patricia McCaughan	California, VIII, 2012

SUMMARY OF WORK

Communications in The Episcopal Church has been in a state of significant flux for the past three years. This situation is attributable primarily to personnel changes during the Church Center reorganization initiated by the new Presiding Bishop, but it is also due to the rapidly changing nature of way in which communication is being done within The Episcopal Church and by The Episcopal Church to the larger world. These two reasons are important in understanding the frustration felt by many serving the Standing Commission as we have attempted to fulfill our mandate.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

During this Triennium, the Interim Director of Communications, Robert Williams, who was appointed to serve in this role when the previous Director, Dan England, resigned, was named the Director of Communications. Under Mr. William's leadership the Communications portion of the Church Center staff underwent a number of reorganizations. It is unclear what was driving the reorganizations, though certainly lack of adequate funding must have required all of the staff to try to do more with fewer resources. The net result of the reorganization was that for a large portion of the triennium it was unclear to those outside the Church Center which staff person was responsible for which area.

The situation does seem to be improving. Within the last few months a national search process has been carried out with broad national participation by the primary communication constituencies of The Episcopal Church. A new director, Anne Rudig, was hired and began her work in January 2009. It is expected that the focus of her first months at the Church Center will be on preparing for this summer's General Convention; but given the new job description for the Director position and assurances from the staff of the Presiding Bishop, there is reason to hope that some of the disruption caused by the personnel changes and reorganizations within the Communications department will cease.

COOPERATION WITH THE STANDING COMMISSION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

This Standing Commission has been severely hampered in its work this past triennium. Though a relatively small amount of money (\$15,000 intended for three meetings) was requested of Program Budget and Finance at General Convention in 2003, that money was removed from the budget and the Commission was again not funded. We did what work we could do by way of e-mail and telephone.

We had significant problems getting access to information such as budgets for Episcopal Church communications, program expenses or information technology costs. A relatively simple request to explain the ongoing costs of the Red Dot web content management system and what it would cost to upgrade to the latest version has still

not been answered. It is unclear to this Standing Commission what is the actual amount of money being spent on Communications by The Episcopal Church and where the money that is being spent is coming from. While the Standing Commission is not charged with financial oversight, attempting to think about the strategic direction of communications within The Episcopal Church is hampered if the financial information is unknown. Part of the limited access to information was attributable to the fact that Director of Communications was serving as liaison to the Standing Commission during a time of transition. This, coupled with the lack of meetings that would have created natural deadlines, seems to have been the primary roadblock. Perhaps the new Director of Communications and the next Standing Commission would be better served if someone other than the Director were to serve as liaison in the coming triennium.

COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES FACING THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Episcopal Church can expect to have to find working answers to a number of issues regarding how it does its internal and external communications in the coming years. The most pressing one at the moment is how to make a transition from paper-based means of communication to a balance of paper and electronic communications. While there are significant cost savings that can be realized by transitioning using electronic and online communications, the reality of the audience whom The Episcopal Church serves is that using electronic means only is not feasible and would not be effective. While much of the internal communications can appropriately be handled electronically, reaching Episcopalians in economic distress or for whom computers are not available requires that we continue use paper and print. The issue for The Episcopal Church is to find the most cost effective balance. It is likely that doing this will require a broad reaching readership survey, which will in turn require spending money to do well. Other challenges that are facing The Episcopal Church are similar in that it will require finding an optimal balance between the needs of those being served and the money that is available to be spent.

Additionally there is a significant question of what the primary focus of the communications work of The Episcopal Church Center should be. There are a number of voices who call for a commitment to journalistic principles and the need for accurate internal reporting on what is taking place within The Episcopal Church. Other voices argue that such reporting is better done by people outside the Church Center and that The Episcopal Church needs to expend greater efforts in the areas of marketing and public relations. Many believe that both are necessary and properly done by the Church Center staff, but there is disagreement as to the relative balance.

Members of the Standing Commission have heard from a number of people around The Episcopal Church that there was little coordination with other groups doing communication work during the past triennium. For example, an Ad campaign was announced and funded without the knowledge of those in diocesan ministry who might have been able to make use of it. Given that funding is limited, any effective communication campaign will have to rely on a coordinated release across all the media markets that we are intending to serve.

While there was a strategic vision created during the present triennium by the Director of Communications (Robert Williams), there does not exist a strategic plan to address the challenges listed above. It is hoped that the new Director of Communications working with the Standing Commission and other stake-holders will create one.

THE RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATIONS

One of the most disturbing developments in The Episcopal Church during the last few years has been the number of diocesan communicators who have been laid off or had their positions eliminated because of financial pressures. A partial reason for these decisions across the church has been a general sense that there was unrealized cost savings to be had by moving from print media to electronic media. The more distressing reason is a sometimes unspoken belief that the relatively low bar to using electronic communications tools leads to a belief that anyone can do an adequate job overseeing communications at all levels of the church. It is this second reason that seems to be causing dioceses especially to layoff or downsize their communication positions in an attempt to cut costs in the face of rising budget pressures. It is the sense of the Commission and of the larger communications community in The Episcopal Church that such actions are misguided. Effective communication in multiple media requires both training and experience, and often the skills that allow a person to function well in

one media do not lead to a similar ability in a different media. Journalism, online communications, video, literature and public relations are all important tools for The Episcopal Church as it works to live into its call to share the Good News of Christ in the places where it ministers. Using different media forms well and in their proper contexts and appropriately to different audiences requires ongoing training and some significant experience. In a time of financial stress, cutting oneself off from the skills needed to effectively communicate the challenges facing the institutions of the church seems particularly shortsighted.

GOING FORWARD

Now that a new Director of Communications has been hired and begun her work at the Church Center, and a special task force has been named by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies to begin the work of analyzing The Episcopal Church’s use of technology to support communications, it is hoped that the challenges listed above will begin to be met. The more fundamental challenge to The Episcopal Church of broadly learning and recognizing the value and critical nature of good communications will most likely continue.

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION A046 CREATION OF POSITION OF INFORMATION OFFICER

- 1 The Episcopal Church is facing many challenges in the field of electronic communications, but is being hampered
2 by the lack of any clear oversight in its use of technology.
3
4 Therefore this General Convention calls upon the Executive Council to work with the Presiding Bishop to create
5 or task an existing staff position with the role of Chief Information Officer in The Episcopal Church.
6
7 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church calls upon
8 the Executive Council to work with the Presiding Bishop to create or task an existing staff position with the role
9 of Chief Information Officer in The Episcopal Church.

EXPLANATION

The role of a Chief Information Officer is well understood in modern business settings. The Episcopal Church at present has no strategic plan to use its existing technology platforms (e-mail servers, database structure, personal computers and mobile devices) effectively and no plan to remove obsolete equipment and services and replace them in a cost-effective and timely manner with new. By creating a position (which brings with it the perhaps insurmountable challenge of finding funding) or tasking an existing staff person with this responsibility and the necessary authority, The Episcopal Church Center can begin to implement best-practices in these areas.

RESOLUTION A047 EXTENSION OF THE A048 TASK FORCE

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church extend the
2 term of the A048 Task Force through the next triennium in order to direct the Church Center and other Church
3 bodies to adopt industry appropriate “best-practices” when adopting new technology and in making communica-
4 tion decisions; and be it further
5
6 *Resolved*, That the amount of \$5,000 be allocated to fund an independent technology audit of current information
7 systems and abilities.

EXPLANATION

The 75th General Convention created a special Task Force in adopting Resolution A048 (2206) to investigate and recommend the acquisition of appropriate technology purchases by The Episcopal Church Center. The present Task Force was not nominated in sufficient time to be able to complete its charge by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies. If this extension is granted, the existing task force will be able to continue its work into the next triennium.

RESOLUTION A048 FUNDING OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON EPISCOPAL COMMUNICATIONS

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church assign
- 2 \$15,000 to the work of the Standing Commission on Episcopal Communications for the 2010-2013 Triennium.

EXPLANATION

The Standing Commission on Episcopal Church Communications has been hampered in fulfilling its mandate by having yet to be given any funds by General Convention to carry out the work it was asked to do. The funds requested should provide sufficient money to hold three meetings during the upcoming triennium and cover any administrative cost that the Standing Commission incurs.

RESOLUTION A049 TASK FORCE TO EMPOWER DATA SHARING IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church directs
- 2 Executive Council to require the official bodies of The Episcopal Church to agree on appropriate mechanisms
- 3 and formats to share the data they have collected between themselves and report back to the Standing
- 4 Commission on Episcopal Church Communications by the end of the coming Triennium.

EXPLANATION

At present there is no complete list of Episcopal clergy or lay leadership and no complete list of contact information. The Pension Group has one set of data, the Church Center has another, and dioceses have various additions. This Resolution, if enacted, would call upon the bodies, which are charged with gathering and administrative oversight of data important to the work of The Episcopal Church, to work to share the data (as allowed by law and as appropriately needed.)

RESOLUTION A050 CHURCH CENTER TECHNOLOGY AUDIT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct that
- 2 the sum of \$45,000 to perform a comprehensive technology audit of the Church Center.

EXPLANATION

A technology audit should be a regularly occurring accounting of all the equipment and software packages purchased by the Church Center for the work of their ministry. The audit allows those tasked with creating a technology to have an overview of what resources are available and would enable them to create a schedule to replace obsolete technology with newer technology as appropriate. Technology audits are acknowledged to be in keeping with commonly accepted best practices.

As best anyone can determine, there has not been a technology audit in many years at the Church Center. The Standing Commission on Episcopal Church Communications and the A048 Task Force were not able to determine if an audit had ever been conducted.